

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF FOURCHE LE FEVRE  
RIVER, ARKANSAS.

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L E T T E R

FROM

THE ACTING SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING,

*With letter of the Chief of Engineers, report of a preliminary examination of Fourche Le Fevre River, Arkansas.*

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FEBRUARY 4, 1893.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered to be printed.

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WAR DEPARTMENT,  
*Washington, February 2, 1893.*

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith a letter from the Chief of Engineers, dated February 1, 1893, together with a copy of a report from Capt. H. S. Taber, Corps of Engineers, dated December 21, 1892, of a preliminary examination made by him in compliance with the provisions of the river and harbor act of July 13, 1892, of Fourche Le Fevre River, Arkansas.

Very respectfully,

L. A. GRANT,  
*Acting Secretary of War.*

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

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OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,  
UNITED STATES ARMY,  
*Washington, D. C., February 1, 1893.*

SIR: I have the honor to submit the accompanying copy of report of the 21st ultimo from Capt. H. S. Taber, Corps of Engineers, of the results of preliminary examination of Fourche Le Fevre River, Arkansas, made to comply with provisions of the river and harbor act approved July 13, 1892.

It is the opinion of Capt. Taber, concurred in by the Division Engineer and by this office, that this river is not worthy of additional improvement by the General Government at the present time.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

THOS. LINCOLN CASEY,  
*Brig. Gen., Chief of Engineers.*

Hon. S. B. ELKINS,  
*Secretary of War.*

## PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF FOURCHE LE FEVRE RIVER, ARKANSAS.

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,  
*Little Rock, Ark., January 21, 1893.*

GENERAL: I have the honor to submit herewith the following report of preliminary examination of Fourche Le Fevre River, Arkansas, in compliance with river and harbor act of July 13, 1892.

In August, 1886, a thorough examination of the entire navigable reach of this river, with the exception of 3 miles, was made in person, and from special report of the assistant engineer upon the other 3 miles a very full report was made. I refer to Annual Report Chief of Engineers, 1887, pp. 1533 and 1534.

It seemed hardly necessary with this data available that a new examination should be made, but in view of the fact that the increased demands of commerce might warrant the improvement of this river, a competent man of experience was engaged to collect commercial statistics through the country watered by this stream, and whose report is appended.

In the report of the preliminary examination referred to above will be found the following paragraph:

Piney Shoal is perhaps a half mile in extent, and consists of a flat ledge. But little could be done for this, except to remove a few loose rocks. It would require a lock and dam to pass even light-draft boats over this shoal. The demands of commerce at present would hardly warrant the expense incident to this improvement.

I reiterate the words used at that time. I do not think commerce has sufficiently increased to demand this improvement.

Since October, 1891, no work has been done on the river. At that time the Whaleback Rock at Red Ferry was removed to the depth of 5 feet. The square section through May Shoal was completed. Piney Shoal was cleared of obstructions by the removal of snags, logs, and rocks. During the season was also removed a large number of snags, several thousand overhanging trees cut, many hundred trees deadened, and many drift piles destroyed, giving to the river a high and medium stage navigation from the mouth to Perryville Landing.

It is believed that the work accomplished, together with that proposed under present appropriation, will answer all the present needs of commerce—for several years at least.

The boat belonging to this stream has been sold to "Improving Arkansas River, Arkansas," and the proceeds, \$3,500, with the amount on hand, to be used in the work on the river.

Based on the aforementioned facts and statements, I am of the opinion still that Fourche Le Fevre River, Arkansas, is not worthy of additional improvement by the General Government at the present time.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. S. TABER,  
*Captain of Engineers.*

Brig. Gen. THOMAS L. CASEY,  
*Chief of Engineers, U. S. A.*

(Through Col. C. B. Comstock, Corps of Engineers, Division Engineer, Southwest Division.)

[First indorsement.]

U. S. ENGINEER OFFICE, SOUTHWEST DIVISION,  
New York, January 30, 1893.

Respectfully forwarded to the Chief of Engineers.

For the reasons stated by the district engineer, I do not think this river worthy of further improvement at present by the United States.

C. B. COMSTOCK,  
Colonel of Engineers, Bvt. Brig. Gen., U. S. A.,  
Division Engineer.

REPORT OF MR. A. WALKER, JR., OVERSEER, UPON COMMERCIAL STATISTICS OF  
FOURCHE LE FEVRE RIVER, FROM PERRYVILLE, ARKANSAS, TO ITS MOUTH.

LITTLE ROCK, ARK., January 13, 1893.

CAPTAIN: Pursuant to your orders, I proceeded to Fourche Le Fevre River by the shortest possible route, viz, via the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad to Morrilton; thence via hack to Perryville, Ark.

*Perryville.*—Perryville is the county seat of Perry County and is situated directly on the Fourche Le Fevre River, and is about 32 miles from its mouth. It is at present the head of navigation. It has a population of 400 inhabitants, 5 general merchandise stores, 2 drug stores, 2 grocery stores, 2 hotels, 1 cotton gin, 3 blacksmith shops, and 1 sawmill with a capacity of 5,000 feet of sawed lumber per day.

The imports of Perryville are chiefly merchandise, groceries, and drugs, of which 600 tons is received annually. Its exports are 2,000 bales of cotton, 800,000 feet of lumber, 800 head of cattle, 500 head of hogs, 8,000 bushels of corn, and 500 tons of cotton seed. These imports and exports are by river transportation, except that which is hauled overland to the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad; and inasmuch as these roads run through a low country the hauling has to be abandoned during the winter or wet months, at which time the shippers are entirely dependent upon the river transportation, which is afforded them by the steamboats *Annie Adams*, *Mary Morgan*, and *Border City*.

Below Perryville to the mouth, there are no towns or stores of any importance whatever. The lands lying along the river, and which are almost totally dependent upon that stream for their transportation of products, are very fertile, producing 65 bushels of corn or three-fourths of a bale of cotton to the acre.

Out of the 64 miles of river frontage, from Perryville to the mouth and back, a distance of 5 miles from either bank, there are about 20,000 acres of land in cultivation, producing 5,000 bales of cotton and about 100,000 bushels of corn; about one-half of this land is subject to overflow and almost total loss of crops. The banks of the river are lined with fine timber, mostly cypress, oak, pine, and ash.

Rankins mill, near the bank of the river and about 4 miles below Perryville, has a capacity of 4,000 feet of sawed lumber per day. Lawson's cotton gin, near the mouth of the river, gins from 400 to 500 bales of cotton per annum.

There are seven regular landings along the river between Perryville and the mouth of the river, but as there are no storehouses, and no one lives at them, no estimate of their shipments can be obtained.

The transportation by boat is very uncertain on account of their irregularity in running, and 70 per cent of the products of this country find their way to the railroad, a distance overland of from 10 to 25 miles, and over the most fearful swampy roads.

About 1,000,000 feet of logs in rafts are lying on or tied to the banks, awaiting rafting to Little Rock, Ark., the market for most of the timber from the Fourche Le Fevre River.

This year (1892) has been a poor year for the timber men operating in this section, but it is expected that the trade will be more than trebled during 1893, as the last poor crops have induced many men to embark in this line of business.

The commerce of this river could be greatly extended if there was one packet making regular trips, so that the shippers could depend upon them and have some certain date for shipment.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. WALKER, Jr.,  
Overseer.

Capt. H. S. TABER,  
Corps of Engineers, U. S. A.

